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Penwith Society of Arts

Tenth Anniversary Exhibition

THE ARTS COUNCIL 1960

The Penwith Society of Arts in Cornwall Tenth Anniversary Exhibition

The Arts Council first toured a selection from the Penwith Society in 1950, the year following its inception, and later in 1954 and 1957. This exhibition marks the Society's tenth anniversary and includes work by both past and present members who have been associated with its development.

We are very grateful to the owners who have lent to this exhibition and to members of the Society for their helpful co-operation. We are also indebted to Sir Herbert Read for the Introduction to this catalogue and to Mr. Alan Bowness for a note on the history of the Penwith Society.

G.W.

Introduction

When it was founded ten years ago, the Penwith Society did me the honour of electing me their President, an office which geographical factors compel me to fulfil *in absentia*. Nevertheless I have followed the development of this Society with close interest, for it represents one of those regional groups on which I believe the vitality of art depends.

For many years St Ives in Cornwall has been an artists' colony, and the reasons for this are not far to seek—the climate is as good as one can find anywhere in the British Isles, and artists will tell you there is a wonderful quality in the light. What is perhaps more important is that over the years a considerable number of studios have been built in and around this small town, and although there are not enough studios to accommodate all the artists who settle there, many are content to wait on the doorsteps.

Until about 1940 St Ives had no particular connection with the modern movement—on the contrary it was a haunt of traditional painters, and even the home of one or two Royal Academicians. During the war, however, first one and then another artist fled from the turmoil and danger of London to seek tranquility in this haven. This exodus included such famous and established artists as Ben Nicholson, Naum Gabo and Barbara Hepworth. Gabo was to leave for America shortly after the end of the war, but Barbara Hepworth and Ben Nicholson have spent nineteen or twenty years there, and these have been years of intense activity.

The Penwith Society is eclectic, and that has been part of its strength. The names I have mentioned belong to the modern movement, and that above all is international in its characteristics. Nevertheless I believe that there is a common element in the work of the Penwith artists which derives, not from a rootless internationalism, but from the landscape and *genius loci* of Cornwall.

This influence will sometimes be indicated by a topographical reference in the titles, but it might be difficult to recognize any particular feature of the landscape. Anyone familiar with that landscape will know what I mean. It seems to me quite certain that all these artists would have painted very different pictures if they had worked in London or Paris. That difference may be intangible, but nevertheless it is in some sense a difference that explains the Society's continuous vitality.

HERBERT READ

A note on the history and purpose of the Penwith Society

In 1949 there were so many artists living in St Ives, and the cleavage between the traditional painters and the moderns was so obvious, that the hospitality that the St Ives Society of Artists offered any serious painter or sculptor in the town was strained to breaking point. The existence of a second society had become necessary as well as desirable. As a result, on Saturday 5 February 1949, at an Extraordinary General Meeting of the St Ives Society a group of the more progressive-minded members resigned, and three days later at the Castle Inn in Fore Street, they constituted the Penwith Society of Arts in Cornwall.

The new society was founded as a tribute to Borlase Smart (1881-1947), a traditional painter who was warmly remembered for the sympathy and encouragement he had always given younger artists. In his memory the Penwith Society has kept a breadth of outlook, and has remained essentially an artists' co-operative not committed to any particular style or belief.

It was however remarkable in at least three respects. Firstly, it sought to be more than just a group of artists exhibiting (and trying to sell) their works. Its aim was to encourage an interest in painting and in all the arts. To this end, sympathetic friends of the Society have been able to join as lay-members and hold their own exhibitions; talks, discussions, film shows and concerts have been arranged and borrowed exhibitions held; and on Tuesday evenings during Summer months the artist members take it in turn to be present at the Society's gallery so that anyone who cares may talk with them about their work and that of their fellow-members. Secondly, the Penwith Society gave an important place in its organization to those craftsmen whose work is carried out mainly by hand and shows a creative element. And thirdly it tried to ensure that membership should remain fluid and standards high, so that the ossification that so often creeps in after the first few years of a Society's life when the first flush of enthusiasm has been lost might be avoided.

This necessitated the Society being given a somewhat complicated constitution, full of checks and counterchecks that outsiders might find puzzling. Numbers are strictly limited to forty, of which not more than ten may be craftsmen, and up to ten Associate Members. The artist members were at one time divided into two equal groups, 'artists primarily aiming at a representational form of art' and 'artists primarily aiming at an abstract form of art'. But this distinction between representational and abstract painters though administratively useful was a difficult one to enforce, and it was abandoned in 1958.

Every two years there is a general election; all the members resign, but, to quote again from the Rules of the Society, 'the retiring Members before retiring shall ballot for the election of new Members from their own ranks and from non-member candidates'—who must already have twice shown work in Penwith exhibitions, sponsored by a member of the Society. For each exhibition a hanging committee of nine is chosen, and it is given considerable powers. If it thinks fit, it can reject members' works, and need not necessarily hang everything that is accepted, as the Committee's aim is to present a group show as well-hung as possible.

The first exhibition in the Summer of 1949 consisted of one hundred works—about eighty paintings and drawings, and ten pieces of sculpture, shown together with pottery, metalwork, furniture and calligraphy—and this pattern has remained much the same throughout the thirty-two shows that the Penwith Society has held. These took place at first only in the Spring and Summer (April-June, and July-September), but since 1952 a Winter exhibition has been added. The Society's gallery was the Public Hall, Fore Street, St Ives, until 1958, when the move to 36 Fore Street was made. Here the disadvantage of smaller and less well-lit premises is offset by the gallery being considerably more accessible and noticeable from the street. About eight thousand people visit the Penwith exhibitions each year.

There were nineteen founder members: Shearer Armstrong, W. Barns-Graham, Sven Berlin, David Cox, Agnes Drey, Leonard Fuller, Isobel Heath, Barbara Hepworth, Marion Hocken, Peter Lanyon, Bernard Leach, Denis Mitchell, Guido Morris, Marjorie Mostyn, Dicon and Robin Nance, Ben Nicholson, H. Segal and John Wells. When the first exhibition opened on 18 June 1949 however, thirty-six members of the Penwith Society were listed in the catalogue: among the new names were Mary Jewels, David Leach, Dod Proctor and Bryan Wynter. Herbert Read was President (and he remains President to this day), Leonard Fuller Chairman, Shearer Armstrong Secretary and George Downing Treasurer; the other members of the Committee were Barbara Hepworth, Peter Lanyon, Bernard Leach, Guido Morris, Ben Nicholson and Misomé Peile.

Of the nineteen founder-members, ten are still active in the Society, so are four of those elected in 1949 to bring the Society up to strength. This has given continuity, but inevitably there have been changes. Peter Lanyon resigned in 1950; so did Sven Berlin who left St Ives in 1953; and Ben Nicholson left St Ives in 1958 after resigning in 1957. Other artists have however settled in the region and joined the Penwith Society—Patrick Heron and Terry Frost in 1951, Janet Leach in 1956 and Roger Hilton in 1957. Victor Pasmore was a member from 1951 to 1953; and those who have worked in West Cornwall

for a Summer or more and have shown at Penwith exhibitions include Robert Adams, Sandra Blow, Patrick Hayman, Peter Potworowski and the potter Shoji Hamada.

Most of the artists whose names have been mentioned are well-known outside St Ives, but the Society would not be serving its purpose did it not give younger painters and sculptors and craftsmen an opportunity to measure their work against that of internationally established artists. Such mixed exhibitions of high quality provide a most valuable testing ground for the young, and by offering their work as a touchstone the older artists associated with the Penwith Society show that they accept their responsibilities towards their fellow artists. This encouragement of unknown painters and sculptors of talent by drawing them into what is in fact a very remarkable artistic community is it seems to me of considerable value in the artistic life of the country as a whole. The success of this part of the Penwith Society's activities can be measured by the fact that no less than four of the younger painter-members, Trevor Bell, Kate Nicholson, Alexander Mackenzie and Karl Weschke have all recently had successful first one-man exhibitions in London—and other members of this generation whose work is included in the touring exhibition will certainly follow their example in the next year or two.

ALAN BOWNESS

Catalogue

Measurements show height before width.
Many of the works are for sale and a price list is available.

PAINTINGS

SHEARER ARMSTRONG

Born in London. Studied in Germany and at Slade School. Founder member of Penwith Society. Fellow of the Royal Society of Arts. One-man exhibition: Aitken Dott, Edinburgh, 1959. Work bought by Hull Education Committee and many private collectors.

1 Cornish Harbour (1959) *Oil: 15½ × 19½ in.*

WILHELMINA BARNS-GRAHAM

Born 1911, Fife. Studied at Edinburgh College of Art. Founder member of Penwith Society. Italian Travelling Scholarship for professional painting, 1955. One-man exhibitions: Redfern Gallery; 1949, 1952; Roland Browse and Delbanco, 1954; Scottish Gallery, Edinburgh, 1956; City Art Gallery, Wakefield, 1957. Public collections: Arts Council; British Council; Leeds City Art Gallery; Hertfordshire Education Committee.

2 Black form, 1954 *Oil: 24 × 42 in.*

3 Forms in Space, November 1959 *Oil: 25 × 40 in.*

TREVOR BELL

Born 1930, Leeds. Studied at Leeds College of Art. Member of Penwith Society since 1955. Italian Government Scholarship, 1958-59. Resident Scholarship, Paris International Biennale, 1959. One-man exhibitions: City Art Gallery, Wakefield, 1957; Waddington Galleries, 1958. Public collections: City Art Gallery, Wakefield; Hull and West Riding Education Committees.

4 Rocking (1958) *Oil: 36 × 30 in.*

5 Activity in Red (1959) *Oil: 25 × 18 in. Lent by the Waddington Galleries.*

DOROTHY BORDASS

Born 1905, London. Studied at Harrow Art School and in Paris and Florence. No paintings executed between 1936 and 1953. Member of Penwith Society since 1959. One-man exhibitions: New Vision Centre, 1958; Woodstock Gallery, 1959. Work in private collections in this country and abroad.

6 Blue Moon (1959) *Oil: 36 × 48 in.*

ROBERT BRENNAN

Born 1925, London. Worked for one year as stained glass painter. Member of Penwith Society since 1957.

7 Waterfront (1959) *Monotype: 12 × 18½ in.*

MICHAEL BROIDO

Born 1927, London. Studied at Central School of Arts and Crafts. Member of Penwith Society since 1956.

8 Black, Grey and White (1959) *Oil: 23×19 in.*

TERRY FROST

Born 1915, Leamington Spa. Studied at Camberwell School of Arts and Crafts. Member of Penwith Society since 1951. Three one-man exhibitions at Leicester Galleries, 1952-58. Gregory Fellow in Painting at Leeds University, 1954-56. Public collections: Tate Gallery; Arts Council; British Council; Art Galleries at Leeds, Liverpool, Wakefield and Aberdeen; National Gallery of Canada; Art Gallery of New South Wales.

9 Black and White (1959) *Oil: 24×30 in. Lent by the Waddington Galleries.*

10 Yellow and Orange Verticals (1959) *Oil: 50×40 in. Lent by the Waddington Galleries.*

LEONARD FULLER

Born 1891, London. Studied at Clapham School of Art and Royal Academy Schools. Founder member and first chairman of Penwith Society. Member of Royal Institute of Oil Painters and Royal Cambrian Academician. Regular exhibitor at Royal Academy, Royal Society of Portrait Painters, Paris Salon etc. Work in both public and private collections.

11 Morning Light (1958) *Oil: 12¾×20½ in.*

ALETHEA GARSTIN

Born at Penzance. Studied under her father, Norman Garstin. Member of Penwith Society since 1952. Several one-man exhibitions in London. Public collections: City Art Galleries at Bristol, Plymouth and Hull. Work in many private collections.

12 Boats at Priglis (1957) *Oil: 10×11 in.*

13 Pony Club at Trereife (1959) *Oil: 16×30 in.*

JEFFREY HARRIS

Born 1932, Leeds. Studied at Leeds College of Art. Member of Penwith Society since 1957.

14 Black, Grey and White (1959) *Oil: 48×48 in.*

PATRICK HERON

Born 1920, Leeds. Studied at Slade School. Member of Penwith Society since 1951. Seven one-man exhibitions at Redfern Gallery, 1947-58. Retrospective exhibition at City Art Gallery, Wakefield, 1952. Awarded Main Prize, John Moores Liverpool Exhibition, 1959. Public collections: Victoria & Albert Museum; Arts Council; British Council; Art Galleries at Leeds, Montreal, Toronto, Vancouver; Brooklyn Museum and Museum of Modern Art, New York; Toledo Museum of Art, Ohio.

15 Strata of Green and Scarlet Vermilion (1957) *Oil: 48×36 in. Lent by the Waddington Galleries.*

16 Vertical Bands (1959) *Oil: 22×48 in. Lent by Leslie Waddington Esq.*

ROGER HILTON

Born 1911, London. Studied at Slade School and in Paris. Member of Penwith Society since 1957. One-man exhibitions: Bloomsbury Gallery, 1936; Gimpel Fils, 1952, 1954, 1956. Public collections: Tate Gallery; Arts Council; Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam.

17 January, 1955 *Oil: 36×30 in. Lent by the Waddington Galleries.*

18 May, 1953 *Oil: 30×25 in. Lent by the Waddington Galleries.*

GWEN LEITCH

Born 1931, Tasmania. Studied at Hobart Art School and Central School of Arts and Crafts. Member of Penwith Society since 1956.

19 Black Soil (1958) *Oil: 24×30 in.*

ALEXANDER MACKENZIE

Born 1923, Liverpool. Studied at Liverpool College of Art. Member of Penwith Society since 1951. One-man exhibition: Waddington Galleries, 1959. Public collections: Bishop Suter Gallery, Nelson, N.Z.; Art Gallery of New South Wales.

20 Black Landscape (1959) *Oil: 18¼×23 in. Lent by the Waddington Galleries.*

21 Landscape Figure (1959) *Oil: 18×36 in. Lent by the Waddington Galleries.*

BEN NICHOLSON

Born 1894, Denham. Attended Slade School for one term. Founder member of Penwith Society until 1957. Many one-man exhibitions in London, Paris and New York. Retrospective exhibitions: Temple Newsam House, Leeds, 1944; Detroit Institute of Art and Walker Art Centre, Minneapolis, 1952-53; Venice Biennale (awarded 'Ulissi' Acquisition Prize) 1954, and shown in Amsterdam, Paris, Brussels, Zürich and London, 1955; Hanover, Mannheim, Hamburg, Essen, 1959; Grand Prix, 'Bianco e Negro' International, Lugano, 1954; International Guggenheim Award, 1956; First prize for painting, Sao Paolo Biennale, 1957. Work represented in important public collections in Great Britain, U.S.A., Canada, Australia, Belgium, Italy, Brazil and Japan.

22 July 30, 1953 (nut brown) *Oil: 70×28¾ in. Lent by Gimpel Fils, Ltd.*

23 Contrapuntal (1953) *Oil: 65¾×47½ in. Lent by the Arts Council.*

24 Cantabria, August 1955 *Relief: 33½ × 30½ in. Lent by Gimpel Fils, Ltd.*

KATE NICHOLSON

Born 1929, Cumberland. Studied at Bath Academy of Art. Member of Penwith Society since 1956. One-man exhibition: Waddington Galleries, 1959. Work in private collections.

25 Duet, 1956 *Oil: 15¾ × 12½ in.*

26 Black Bottle, July 1958 *Oil: 25¾ × 19¾ in.*

VICTOR PASMORE

Born 1908, Surrey. Evening student at Central School of Arts and Crafts. Member of Penwith Society, 1951-53. Many one-man exhibitions in London since 1940. Retrospective exhibition: Institute of Contemporary Arts, 1954. Will represent Great Britain at Venice Biennale, 1960. Public collections: Tate Gallery; Arts Council; British Council; Museum of Modern Art, New York; National Gallery of Canada; Art Galleries at Leeds, Liverpool, Manchester, Newcastle upon Tyne, Southampton.

27 Collage (1950) *19 × 16 in. Lent by Mr and Mrs J. Milnes-Smith.*

28 Relief Construction in Black and White (1950) *Painted wood: 53 × 28 in.*

MISOMÉ PEILE

Born 1907, Hampshire. Studied in Rome 1938-39 and later under Leonard Fuller. Member of Penwith Society since 1949. One-man exhibitions: R.W.S. Galleries, London, 1949; Passmore Edwards Gallery, Newlyn, 1959. Work in many private collections.

29 Build-up (1959) *Oil: 30 × 48 in.*

DOD PROCTOR

Born in London. Studied at Stanhope Forbes School, Newlyn and in Paris. Member of Penwith Society since 1949. Seven one-man exhibitions at Leicester Galleries, 1925-45. Work bought by the Tate Gallery, many provincial galleries and private collectors in this country and abroad.

30 Almond and Oxalis (1948) *Oil: 17 × 13½ in.*

MICHAEL SNOW

Born 1930, Manchester. No formal artistic training. Member of Penwith Society since 1953. Work in public and private collections in this country and abroad.

31 Incised Painting (myriad) (1959) *Oil: 28 × 18 in.*

BILLIE WATERS

Born 1898, Surrey. Studied in London, Paris and Newlyn. Member of Penwith Society since 1952. One-man exhibition: Leicester Galleries, 1933. Exhibited with Royal Academy and in many provincial galleries. Work in many private collections.

32 Green Depth (1959) *Oil: 14½ × 17½*

JOHN WELLS

Born 1907, Sussex. Qualified M.B., B.S., London, 1930. Started full-time painting in 1945. Founder member of Penwith Society. One-man exhibition: Lefevre Gallery, 1946. Critics Prize, 1958. Public collections: City Art Gallery, Wakefield; Gottenburg Museum; Providence Museum, Rhode Island.

33 Landscape Evocation (1959) *Oil: 24×58 in.*

34 Painting, 1959—Blue and Black *Oil: 24×20 in.*

KARL WESCHKE

Born 1925, Germany. Mainly self-taught. Member of Penwith Society since 1957. One-man exhibitions: New Vision Centre, 1958; Woodstock Gallery, 1959. Public collections: Museum of Modern Art, New York; Art Museum, Baltimore; Art Gallery of New South Wales.

35 Study for Deposition (1958) *Oil: 48×36 in.*

GUY WORSDELL

Born 1908, York. Studied at Central School of Arts and Crafts. Member of Penwith Society since 1953. One-man exhibitions: Aitken Dott, Edinburgh, 1959; John Whibley Gallery, London, 1959. Work in many private collections in this country and abroad.

36 White Skeined Landscape (1959) *Oil: 23¼×29*

BRYAN WYNTER

Born 1915, London. Studied at Slade School. Member of Penwith Society since 1949. One-man exhibitions: Six at Redfern Gallery, 1947-57; Waddington Galleries, 1959. Public collections: Arts Council; British Council; Victoria and Albert Museum; City Art Galleries at Manchester, Birmingham and Bristol; Museum of Modern Art, New York.

37 Tumult (1958) *Oil: 54×36 in. Lent by the Waddington Galleries.*

38 Dark Journey (1958) *Oil: 30×25 in. Lent by the Waddington Galleries.*

SCULPTURE

BARBARA HEPWORTH

Born 1903, Wakefield. Studied at Royal College of Art, and in Florence and Rome. Founder member of Penwith Society. Created C.B.E., 1958. Many one-man exhibitions in London and New York. Retrospective exhibitions: Whitechapel Art Gallery, 1954; touring exhibition, U.S.A., 1955-57; Sao Paolo Biennale (awarded Grand Prix) 1959. Public collections: Tate Gallery; Victoria and Albert Museum; Arts Council; British Council; Museum of Modern Art, New York; Rijksmuseum Kröller-Müller, Holland; National Galleries of Australia and Canada; City Art Galleries at Birmingham, Bristol, Leeds, Manchester and Wakefield.

39 Torso II (Torcello) (1958) *Bronze: ht. 34½ in.*

40 Orpheus (1956-59) *Brass with strings: ht. 20 in.*

41 Variation on a Theme (1958) *Bronze: ht. 17 in.*

ROGER LEIGH

Born 1925, Gloucestershire. Studied architecture at Liverpool University. Began sculpture in 1948. Worked with Barbara Hepworth at St Ives, 1953-54. Member of Penwith Society since 1953. Work in private collections.

42 Applewood Figure (1959) *ht. 22½ in.*

JOHN MILNE

Born 1931, Lancashire. Studied at Salford School of Art, Académie de la Grande Chaumière, Paris, and for a short time with Barbara Hepworth. Member of Penwith Society since 1956. One-man exhibition: Crane Gallery, Manchester, 1956. Works bought by British Electricity Authority and Lancashire County Council.

43 Bronze, 1959 *ht. 22½ in.*

DENIS MITCHELL

Born 1912, Middlesex. Studied at Swansea Art School. Assistant to Barbara Hepworth, 1949-58. Founder member of Penwith Society. One-man exhibition: A.I.A. Gallery, 1957. Public collections: Walker Art Gallery, Liverpool; Art Gallery of New South Wales.

44 Widdon Form (1959) *Bronze: ht. 16¼ in. Lent by the Waddington Galleries.*

45 Taut Form (1959) *Bronze: ht. 38¼ in. Lent by the Waddington Galleries.*

BRUCE TAYLOR

Born 1921, Yorkshire. Studied at the Bath Academy of Art. Member of the Penwith Society since 1956. One-man exhibition: Drian Gallery, 1958. Public collections: Museum of Modern Art, New York; Leicestershire Education Committee.

46 Phoenix II (1958) *Steel: ht. 37 in.*

BRIAN WALL

Born 1931, London. Glassblower 1945-51. Member of Penwith Society since 1956. One-man exhibitions: A.A. Gallery, London, 1957; Woodstock Gallery, 1959. Public collections: Arts Council; Art Gallery of New South Wales.

47 Black Edge III—1959 *Steel: ht. 37 in.*

48 Open Form I—1959 *Steel: ht. 51 in.*

POTTERY

BERNARD LEACH

Born 1887, Hong Kong. Studied at Slade School and London School of Art. Founder member of Penwith Society. Over

seventy-five one-man exhibitions in this country, America and Japan. Public collections: Victoria and Albert Museum; Art Galleries at Manchester, Bristol, Southampton, York, Truro, Nottingham; also represented in many American and Japanese Museums.

49 Tenmoku Lidded Pot *ht. 13½ in.*

50 Oatmeal Decorated Vase *ht. 11 in.*

51 Fluted Porcelain Bowl *diam. 9½ in.*

52 Bottle, Grey Inlaid *ht. 8 in.*

DAVID LEACH

Born 1910, Tokio. Studied under his father, Bernard Leach and worked at Leach Pottery for twenty years. Member of Penwith Society since 1954. One-man exhibition: Liberty's, 1956.

53 Fluted Grey Bowl *diam. 5¾ in.*

JANET LEACH

Born 1918, Texas. Trained as a sculptor. Studied pottery in America and Japan. Member of Penwith Society since 1956. One-man exhibition: Primavera, 1959. Public collections: Art Galleries at Bristol, Stoke-on-Trent and Derby; National Museum of Wales.

54 Brown and White Vase *ht. 10 in.*

55 Large Black Jar *ht. 20 in.*

56 Large Red Decorated Dish *diam. 13 in.*

57 Black Pot, Cut Side *ht. 10 in.*

BILL MARSHALL

Born 1923, St Ives. Studied under Bernard Leach and now foreman at Leach Pottery. Member of Penwith Society since 1953. One-man exhibitions: Liberty's, 1956; Primavera, 1959. Public collections: Art Galleries at Bristol, Stoke-on-Trent, Derby; National Museum of Wales

58 Large Bowl, Blue Rim *diam. 17¼ in.*

59 Tenmoku Vase *ht. 13 in.*

60 Salt Glaze Bowl *diam. 7¼ in.*

61 Cane-handled Teapot *ht. 6¼ in.*

CRAFTS

ALICE MOORE

Born 1909, Hawaii. Studied at Penzance School of Art and Brighton College of Art; one year at Royal College of Needlework, London. Member of Penwith Society since 1949. Member of the Red Rose Guild of Craftsmen and Crafts Centre of Great Britain. Work in many private collections.

62 Children with Baskets (1958) *17 × 10½ in.*